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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 P.M., E.D.S.T., JULY 31, 1975

ISSUED: July 31, 1975

Forwarded to:  
Honorable James E. Dow  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-75-60

Two recent investigations of air carrier accidents by the National Transportation Safety Board disclosed that more efficient utilization of cabin attendants aboard the aircraft could have provided for a safer evacuation of the occupants. In this respect, the Safety Board noted that seating assignments and evacuation duties are not clearly delineated for flight attendants who are carried on board air carrier aircraft in excess of the number required by 14 CFR 121.391.

During our investigation of the Pan American World Airways Boeing 707 accident at Pago Pago, on January 30, 1974, the Safety Board found that, although six flight attendants were aboard the aircraft, (four were required) none was seated in the overwing area at the time of the accident. Although one of the extra flight attendants may have been assigned such an emergency duty station by the senior flight attendant, surviving passengers, who exited through the overwing exits, indicated that no flight attendants directed the evacuation in this area.

During an Overseas National Airways DC-8 emergency evacuation at Bangor, Maine, on June 20, 1973, some passengers evacuated the aircraft through the overwing exits despite warnings shouted by flight attendants not to do so; no flight attendants were stationed in the overwing area to prevent evacuations from these exits. As a result, some of the passengers were injured needlessly in the evacuation.

14 CFR 121.391 requires that the number of flight attendants carried on board an aircraft in compliance with the regulation must, during takeoff and landings, "... be located as near as practicable to required floor level exits and shall be evenly distributed throughout the airplane in order to provide the most effective egress of passengers in the event of an emergency evacuation." This regulation insures that some of the floor

level exits are manned in case of an evacuation. However, when more flight attendants are carried than required by regulations, current regulations do not provide guidelines to insure that the extra flight attendants are stationed near unmanned floor level exits or at overwing exits, for more effective use during an evacuation.

A review of the FAA-approved emergency procedures sections of the flight attendant manuals of several U. S. air carriers revealed that extra flight attendants carried on board air carrier aircraft are assigned locations in galley areas as well as in overwing areas to provide passengers guidance during an emergency evacuation. In fact, Pan American World Airways initiated such a procedure after the Pago Pago accident. This practice, however, has not been implemented by all air carriers.

Although the number of flight attendants required by 14 CFR 121.391 satisfies minimum safety standards, many air carriers operate their aircraft in excess of this minimum requirement, and assign emergency duties to these extra flight attendants. The Safety Board believes that in such cases the even distribution of flight attendants throughout the aircraft during takeoff and landing would insure more effective guidance for all passengers in case of an emergency which, in turn, would enhance passenger safety significantly.

Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Issue an Air Carrier Operations Bulletin requiring Principal Operations Inspectors to alert their assigned air carriers to the importance of assigning emergency duties and seating locations to extra flight attendants carried on board aircraft in excess of the number required by 14 CFR 121.391 so that they are more evenly distributed throughout the aircraft to provide more effective guidance to passengers at more exits during an emergency evacuation.  
(Class II)

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
By: John H. Reed  
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.